about 3,000 tents, and having its centre in the oasis of Merv. To the South of them the Salors and Saryks extend their wanderings into Afghan territory, whilst the Yomuds, the northermost of the Turkoman tribes, who number about 4,800 tents, live in the vicinity of Khiva. Anyone who has ever taken refuge in a Turkoman tent during the heat of the day knows how hospitable, frank, and trustworthy the people are. They are of a decidedly warlike character. Until after the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Russians put a stop to their activities, they were the most redoubtable caravan robbers in all Turkestan, and had, moreover, a pronounced bent towards kidnapping and the slave trade. They extended their raids far into Persia, seizing what prisoners they could. The wealthier of these were released after the extortion of as large a ransom as possible, the remainder being sold into slavery. The extent of this traffic may be gathered from the fact that when the Russians conquered Khiva in 1864 they freed 40,000 slaves who had been seized by the Turkomans and sold there.

The Turkomans are a tall, well-built, and vigorous race with an abundant growth of beard, large eyes, and brown, not yellow, skin. The women, too, are tall and slender; they are among the most beautiful in Asia. The tribe is much farther removed from the Mongol type than are the Kirghiz. The reason for this may be that the Turkomans live so close to the Iranian frontier, and that they have for centuries been in close contact with Iranian Tribes.